

Dog Days of Yoga

Written by Shelley Lowther

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Every morning, I watch my dog Oscar greet his day with a long and juicy looking downward facing dog. He stretches his spine, sometimes even breaking into a three-legged dog pose, carefully lengthening each leg before a vigorous shake. Some mornings, this routine is paired with a yawn that only a dog could manage before he bounds off to start his day.

My dog is a better yogi than I am.

Every day, he does his doggy version of a sun salutation. He never fails to start his day with asana. He practices before he does anything else. Oscar has the discipline that I sometimes lack.

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His consistent albeit brief asana practice is not the only quality that makes Oscar a better yogi than me. Oscar really does take his yoga off the mat.

My dog lives in the present. He is not burdened with the past. Rather than brooding about what happened yesterday, Oscar lives and breathes in the present moment. He drinks in life as it comes, without diluting his experience with preconceived notions, feelings of inadequacy or ego. He's present.

He doesn't worry about the future either. He knows that he will eat, exercise and sleep. He is not concerned with material things, or worried about what anyone thinks. He innately knows that what people think about him is none of his business. Furthermore, he doesn't care.

My dog also does not judge himself or others based on outward appearances. He might smell people to discover their intentions, sure, but if we humans could get in touch with our own intuition we would be more in tune to what people intend as well (maybe we wouldn't SNIFF people, but you get the point).

Oscar knows that the best things in life aren't things. He knows that a good run across a field or a swim in the river trumps anything that money can buy. More than anything in the world, he loves to feel wind on his muzzle and air in his lungs. He loves to live.

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Thousands of years ago, when the original yogis were creating asanas based on the behaviors of animals and nature, they were on to something. Somewhere along the line, humans lost some of the humanity that many animals still possess. We lost the ability to live in the moment, to fully feel life, to breathe in exhilaration, to play with abandon, to sleep like a baby. We often forget what it is to be human.

Oscar loves unconditionally. He does not know hate. He fully lives life. How many people can say the same?

Pay attention: Everything you need to know about yoga, you can learn from your dog.

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